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Consideration, with a view to adoption, of the draft strategic plan of the International Seabed Authority for the period 2019–2023

Report of the Secretary-General

1. At its twenty-third session, the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority requested the Secretary-General inter alia to submit a draft strategic plan to the Assembly for consideration at its twenty-fourth session, in 2018, and to regularly inform members of the Authority on progress with respect to the plan (see ISBA/23/A/13).

2. Preparatory work was subsequently undertaken by the secretariat, including meetings with the permanent representatives to the Authority and an open briefing for members of the Authority at United Nations Headquarters in New York. A first draft of a strategic plan was presented in February 2018 in English and French, the two working languages of the Authority. As part of the consultation efforts of the Secretary-General, an open informal briefing took place on 7 March 2018 on the margins of the meeting of the Council. The briefing was open to members of the Authority and those observers present in Kingston. Several suggestions and comments were made on that occasion. The Secretariat subsequently launched an open consultation for all stakeholders during the period 12 March to 27 April 2018, seeking further comments, views and contributions.

3. A total of 23 submissions on the draft strategic plan were received. The largest number of submissions was made by members of the Authority (15), followed by observers (4) and contractors (3). One submission was made by an individual.

4. Some members and stakeholders suggested a longer timespan for the strategic plan than the five-year timespan currently proposed, with a view to aligning the plan with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1). While such a recommendation is not without merit, it should be noted that a strategic plan covering such an extended timespan would present difficulties in terms of flexibility of adjustment in the light of evolving challenges and priorities as identified by members of the Authority. Such an approach would also require the development of a type of strategic plan along different lines, requiring further investments in resources.

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5. Efforts were made to craft a strategic plan that is "action-oriented" and takes a pragmatic approach, placing emphasis on the highest priorities for the Authority during the period 2019–2023. The Secretary-General has revised the draft strategic plan, taking into account the suggestions and comments made during the consultation period, at the various meetings and at the briefing session. The plan, as revised, is attached as annex I to the present document and is presented for consideration by the Assembly of the Authority. The Assembly is invited to consider, with a view to adoption, the Strategic Plan of the International Seabed Authority for the Period 2019–2023, as contained in annex I to the present document. For that purpose, a draft decision is set out in annex II to the present document.

Annex I

Draft strategic plan of the International Seabed Authority for the period 2019–2023

Strategic Plan of the International Seabed Authority for the Period 2019–2023

I. Introduction

1. The present strategic plan embodies the vision of the International Seabed Authority for the implementation of part XI and other provisions relating to the Area under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 and the 1994 Agreement relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea during the five-year period 2019–2023. It takes into account that, pursuant to the Implementation Agreement, the setting up and the functioning of the Authority shall be based on an evolutionary approach in order that it may discharge effectively its responsibilities at various stages of the development of activities in the Area (1994 Agreement, annex, sect. 1 (3)).

2. The Convention and the 1994 Agreement constitute an intricate and unitary system of rights, obligations, duties and responsibilities in connection with activities in the Area. The system involves a broad stakeholder base which includes States parties, sponsoring States, flag States, coastal States, State enterprises, private investors, other users of the marine environment and interested global and regional intergovernmental organizations. All have a role in the development, implementation and enforcement of rules and standards for activities in the Area to ensure that these activities are carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole. Through this Plan, the Authority aims to engage with stakeholders in implementing the regime for the Area accordingly. The strategic plan will be supplemented by an action plan, including key performance indicators, and will be kept under regular review by the Assembly.

3. The strategic plan consists of the following components:

(a) Mission statement;

(b) Context and challenges;

(c) Strategic directions for 2019–2023;

(d) Expected outcomes.

4. The guiding principles of the strategic plan are the following:

(a) Promote the orderly, safe and rational management of the resources of the Area for the benefit of mankind as a whole;

(b) Support the implementation of the international legal regime of the Area, including the Authority's rules, regulations and procedures;

(c) Promote the exchange of best practices among States and contractors;

(d) Ensure the effective protection of the marine environment;

(e) Provide public access to environmental information;

(f) Ensure the use of best available scientific information in decision-making;

(g) Require the application of the best available techniques and best environmental practices;

(h) Ensure accountability for results.

5. The strategic directions and priorities identified in the plan are directed primarily by:

(a) The Convention, and in particular article 162 (2) (o) (ii), in which it is stated that: priority shall be given to the adoption of rules, regulations and procedures for the exploration for and exploitation of polymetallic nodules;

(b) The 1994 Agreement, including:

(i) Annex, section 1 (5), which sets out the matters on which the Authority will concentrate between the entry into force of the Convention and the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation;

(ii) Annex, section 1 (5) (f), which requires the adoption of rules, regulations and procedures necessary for the conduct of activities in the Area as they progress and that such rules, regulations and procedures take into account the terms of the Agreement, the prolonged delay in commercial deep seabed mining and the likely pace of activities in the Area;

(iii) Annex, section 2, with regard to those functions of the Enterprise that complement the relevant priorities as set out in section 1 (5) of the annex;

(iv) Annex, section 5, with regard to those principles, in addition to the provisions of article 144 of the Convention, on transfer of technology, that complement the relevant priorities as set out in section 1 (5) of the annex;

(v) Annex, section 6, with regard to those principles for a production policy that complement the relevant priorities as set out in section 1 (5) of the annex.

6. The Plan also takes into account:

(a) The current status of implementation by the Authority of the priorities set out in the 1994 Agreement, in particular those set out in section 1 (5) of the annex, and in the Convention, as well as activities mandated by the Council;

(b) The Authority's current and projected workload, resources and capacity for the period of the present draft strategic plan;

(c) Other relevant international agreements, principles and objectives, including the 2030 Agenda.

II. Mission statement

7. The mission of the International Seabed Authority is to be the organization through which States Parties organize and control activities in the Area, which is the common heritage of mankind, to promote the orderly, safe and responsible management and development of the resources of the Area for the benefit of mankind as a whole, including through the effective protection of the marine environment and contributing to agreed international objectives and principles, including the Sustainable Development Goals. This will be accomplished by developing and maintaining a comprehensive regulatory mechanism for commercial deep seabed mining that incorporates effective protection of the marine environment and of human health and safety, the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits from activities in the Area and allows for fully integrated participation of developing States through knowledge and best practice exchange consistent with the principle of the common heritage of mankind.

III. Context and challenges

8. In an ever-changing world, and in its role as custodian of the common heritage of mankind, the Authority faces many challenges. As described in this section, it needs to achieve an appropriate balance between multiple objectives.

Globalization and sustainable development

9. The United Nations has adopted a new development agenda, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (General Assembly resolution 70/1). As part of this new agenda, 17 Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted. Of most relevance to the Authority is Sustainable Development Goal 14 — Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development — but other Goals also have relevance to the work of the Authority (see appendix I).

10. The challenge for the Authority is to contribute to the timely and effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 14, through implementing the economic, environmental and social mandates assigned to it under the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. These mandates include: ensuring that activities in the Area are carried out for the benefit of mankind as a whole (Convention, art. 140 (1)); ensuring effective protection for the marine environment (ibid., art. 145); and of human life (ibid., art. 146); promoting and encouraging the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area (ibid., art. 143); and the effective participation of developing States in activities in the Area (ibid., art. 148). Also included are the importance of fostering healthy development of the world economy and balanced growth of international trade (ibid., art. 150); ensuring the development of the resources of the Area (ibid., art. 150 (a)); the orderly, safe and rational management of the resources of the Area (ibid., art. 150 (b)); the enhancement of opportunities for all States parties (ibid., art. 150 (g)); and the development of the common heritage for the benefit of mankind as a whole (ibid., art. 150 (i)).

The need for exploitation regulations

11. The primary means by which the Authority is required to organize, carry out and control activities in the Area on behalf of mankind as a whole is to adopt and uniformly apply rules, regulations and procedures (ibid., annex III, art. 17). The basis for these rules, regulations and procedures is annex III to the Convention, which complements part XI and is further governed by the 1994 Agreement. Annex III, sets out the basic conditions for prospecting, exploration and exploitation in the Area. The 1994 Agreement stipulates that rules, regulations and procedures relating to the conduct of activities in the Area are to be adopted as those activities progress. Regulations governing exploration have been adopted, and the challenge now is to make the transition to exploitation. Regulations for exploitation must reflect best international standards and practices, as well as agreed principles of sustainable development.

12. In planning its work, the Authority must carefully analyse the prospects for commercial deep seabed mining, as well as deep sea technology development. Although market uncertainty and volatility are major factors driving commercial investment, beyond the control of the Authority, the need for regulatory certainty, with clear requirements to ensure environmental protection and clear financial terms, is a critical element in advancing deep seabed mining.

Environmental protection

13. Ensuring effective protection for the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from such activities in the Area (ibid., art. 145) receives detailed attention in the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. The 1994 Agreement provides that the adoption of rules, regulations and procedures incorporating applicable standards for the protection and preservation of the marine environment (Agreement, annex, sect. 1 (5) (g)) is one of the matters on which the Authority will concentrate between the entry into force of the Convention and the approval of the first plan of work for exploitation. The Convention requires the Authority to adopt rules, regulations and procedures designed to prevent, reduce and control pollution and other hazards to the marine environment having the potential to interfere with the ecological balance of the marine environment. The Authority is also required to protect and conserve the natural resources of the Area, preventing damage to the flora and fauna of the marine environment (Convention, art. 145).

14. The challenge for the Authority is to adopt a policy and regulatory framework for environmental management that achieves the effective protection of the marine environment, under circumstances of considerable scientific, technical and commercial uncertainty. The framework should be adaptive, practical and technically feasible. It must satisfy the extensive marine environmental protection requirements of the Convention, as well as taking into account relevant aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals and other international environmental targets, such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The process for developing the framework and its implementation must be transparent and allow for stakeholder input. The development of regional environmental assessments and management plans, in particular, demands a collaborative and transparent approach to both the collection and sharing of environmental data. The process must ensure the fully integrated participation of developing States, not least in connection with international obligations to build technical capacity.

Promoting the sharing of the results of marine scientific research

15. Marine scientific research plays a critical role in the responsible management of the oceans and its resources. Such research is also vital to scientific advancement and to the effective, efficient and commercially and environmentally sustainable conduct of activities in the Area. It is first mentioned in the preamble to the Convention, and an entire chapter of the Convention (part XIII) is devoted to the subject, which is also addressed with regard to the Area in part XI (e.g., art. 143), and in the 1994 Agreement. As explicitly stated, it is among the priorities of the Authority, notably with regard to the need to ensure acquisition of scientific knowledge (Agreement, annex, sect. 1 (5) (i)).

16. Under article 143 (2) of the Convention, the Authority must promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area and coordinate and disseminate the results of such research and analysis when available. The Authority may also carry out marine scientific research in its own right (Convention, art. 143 (2)).

17. The challenge for the Authority is to adopt strategies and to seek adequate resources to enable it to strengthen cooperation with States parties, the international scientific community, contractors and relevant international organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Hydrographic Organization, and collaborative programmes such as JPI Oceans, to obtain, assess and disseminate quantitative and qualitative data and information in an open and transparent manner.

The importance of capacity-building and technology transfer in realizing the common heritage of mankind

18. Capacity-building and technology transfer are closely linked and the Convention therefore sets out specific requirements to deal with them accordingly. The Authority is thereby required to take measures to acquire technology and scientific knowledge relating to activities in the Area (ibid., art. 144 (1) (a)) and to ensure a variety of both capacity-building and technology transfer mechanisms for developing States (ibid., art. 274). In line with this, States are required by the Convention to cooperate actively with competent international organizations and the Authority to encourage and facilitate the transfer to developing States, their nationals and the Enterprise of skills and marine technology with regard to activities in the Area (ibid., art. 273).

19. The challenge for the Authority is to ensure that capacity-building and technology transfer measures are developed and implemented effectively, subject to all legitimate interests including, inter alia, the rights and duties of holders, suppliers and recipients of technology (ibid., art. 274) and that they reflect the needs of developing States, identified through transparent processes in which developing States are full participants.

Facilitating the participation of developing States in activities in the Area

20. The Authority must promote the participation of developing States in activities in the Area. This is explicit in the Convention and the 1994 Agreement. Activities in the Area shall be carried out with a view to ensuring the expansion of opportunities for participation in such activities consistent with articles 144 and 148 (ibid., art. 150 (c)); the enhancement of opportunities for all States Parties, irrespective of their social and economic systems or geographical location, to participate in the development of the resources of the Area (ibid., art. 150 (g)); and the development of the common heritage for the benefit of mankind as a whole (ibid., art. 150 (i)). The challenge for the Authority is to identify mechanisms, including capacity-building programmes, to ensure fully integrated participation by developing States in activities in the Area at all levels. This includes identifying possible approaches to the future establishment of the Enterprise in a way that meets the requirements of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.

Equitable sharing of benefits

21. The Authority must adopt rules, regulations and procedures for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area (ibid., art. 140 (2)). Similar rules, regulations and procedures must also be adopted for the distribution of payments made through the Authority under article 82 (4) of the Convention, in respect of the exploitation of non-living resources on the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles (ibid., art. 82 (1).

22. The challenge for the Authority in developing equitable sharing criteria is to understand the financial and economic model for deep seabed mining in an environment of considerable commercial uncertainty, including the trends of and the factors affecting supply, demand and prices of minerals which may be derived from the Area, bearing in mind the interests of both importing and exporting countries, and in particular of the developing States among them (ibid., art. 164 (2) (b)).

Organizational development

23. In accordance with the 1994 Agreement, the setting up and the functioning of the organs and subsidiary bodies of the Authority shall be based on an evolutionary

approach, taking into account the functional needs of the organs and subsidiary bodies concerned in order that they may discharge effectively their respective responsibilities at various stages of the development of activities in the Area. It is also emphasized in the 1994 Agreement that, in order to minimize costs to States Parties, all organs and subsidiary bodies to be established under the Convention shall be cost-effective (annex, sect. 1 (2)).

24. The challenge for the Authority is to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of the regulatory regime and to be ready to perform its functions as a supervisory body in anticipation of the commencement of the commercial exploitation of deep seabed minerals. The Authority must adapt, enhance and increase its structural and functional capacities at a rate that keeps pace with progress in deep sea mining, covers all necessary disciplines and ensures that adequate and appropriate levels of flexibility are built into the system. A major challenge to creating an Authority with the necessary institutional capacities will be to secure adequate funding, especially during the transition from exploration to exploitation. This makes it essential to plan well in advance for the future evolution of the organization and its subsidiary bodies.

Transparency

25. Transparency is an essential element of good governance and is therefore a guiding principle for the Authority in the conduct of its business as a publicly accountable international organization. This includes transparency in the internal administration of the Authority, as well as its internal procedures, the procedures of its various organs and subsidiary bodies and its procedures towards States. Transparency plays a fundamental role in building trust in the Authority and in enhancing the Authority's accountability, credibility and support across its stakeholder base.

IV. Strategic directions

Strategic direction 1

Realize the role of the Authority in a global context

26. The Authority will implement the following strategic directions:

Strategic Direction 1.1. Align its programmes and initiatives towards the realization of those Sustainable Development Goals relevant to its mandate.

Strategic Direction 1.2. Establish and strengthen strategic alliances and partnerships with relevant subregional, regional and global organizations with a view to more effective cooperation in the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources, consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and international law, including the pooling of resources and funding, where appropriate, in particular in connection with marine scientific research, to avoid the duplication of efforts and to benefit from synergies.

Strategic Direction 1.3. Build a comprehensive and inclusive approach to the development of the common heritage for the benefit of mankind as a whole that balances the three pillars of sustainable development.

Strategic Direction 1.4. Promote the effective and uniform implementation of the international legal regime of the Area, including the Authority's rules, regulations and procedures, and pay particular attention to the needs of developing States.

Strategic Direction 1.5. Strengthen cooperation and coordination with other relevant international organizations and stakeholders in order to promote mutual "reasonable regard" between activities in the Area and other activities in the marine environment and to effectively safeguard the legitimate interests of members of the Authority and contractors.

Strategic direction 2

Strengthen the regulatory framework for activities in the Area

27. The Authority will implement the following strategic directions:

Strategic Direction 2.1. Adopt rules, regulations and procedures covering all phases of deep sea mineral exploration and exploitation on the basis of best available information and in line with the policies, objectives, criteria, principles and provisions set out in the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.

Strategic Direction 2.2. Ensure that the rules, regulations and procedures governing mineral exploitation incorporate best practices for environmental management and are underpinned by sound commercial principles in order to promote investment on a "level playing field".

Strategic Direction 2.3. Ensure that the legal framework for activities in the Area is adaptive and responsive to new technology, information and knowledge and advances in international law relating to the Area, in particular in connection with international law rules on responsibility and liability.

Strategic Direction 2.4. Ensure that the regulatory framework gives due consideration to and promotes the participation of developing States in activities in the Area in accordance with the Convention and the 1994 Agreement.

Strategic Direction 2.5. Advance the development of the regulatory framework for activities in the Area, taking into account trends and developments relating to deep seabed mining activities, including objective analysis of world metal market conditions and metal prices, trends and prospects, through a predictable process with clear timelines, based on consensus, and that allows for stakeholder input in appropriate ways.

Strategic Direction 2.6. Adopt rules, regulations and procedures for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area.

Strategic Direction 2.7. Conduct a study of the potential impact of mineral production from the Area on the economies of developing land-based producers of those minerals which are likely to be most seriously affected, with a view to minimizing their difficulties and assisting them in their economic adjustment, taking into account the work done in this regard by the Preparatory Commission (Agreement, annex, sect. 1 (5) (e)) and develop possible criteria for economic assistance.

Strategic direction 3

Protect the marine environment

28. The Authority will implement the following strategic directions:

Strategic Direction 3.1. Progressively develop, implement and keep under review an adaptive, practical and technically feasible regulatory framework,

based on best environmental practices, for the protection of the marine environment from harmful effects which may arise from activities in the Area.

Strategic Direction 3.2. Develop, implement and keep under review regional environmental assessments and management plans for all mineral provinces in the Area where exploration is taking place.

Strategic Direction 3.3. Ensure public access to environmental information.

Strategic Direction 3.4. Develop scientifically and statistically robust monitoring programmes and methodologies to assess the potential for activities in the Area to interfere with the ecological balance of the marine environment.

Strategic direction 4

Promote and encourage marine scientific research in the Area

29. The Authority will implement the following strategic directions:

Strategic Direction 4.1. Continue to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research with respect to activities in the Area, with particular emphasis on research related to the environmental effects of activities in the Area.

Strategic Direction 4.2. Collect and disseminate the results of research and analysis, when available.

Strategic Direction 4.3. Strengthen and, as appropriate, establish strategic alliances and partnerships with relevant subregional, regional and global organizations, including the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, the International Hydrographic Organization and collaborative programmes such as JPI Oceans, to share data and information in an open and transparent manner, avoid the duplication of efforts and benefit from synergies, for example, by aligning with the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, which will address knowledge gaps to be identified by the First Global Integrated Marine Assessment (World Ocean Assessment).

Strategic Direction 4.4. Be proactive in engaging with the international scientific community through workshops and sponsored publications and by promoting access to non-confidential information and data, in particular those data relating to the marine environment.

Strategic Direction 4.5. Compile summaries of the status of environmental baseline data and develop a process to assess the environmental implications of activities in the Area (Convention, art. 165 (d)).

Strategic direction 5

Build capacity for developing States

30. The Authority will implement the following strategic directions:

Strategic Direction 5.1. Ensure that all capacity-building programmes and measures and their delivery are meaningful, tangible, efficient, effective and targeted at the needs of developing States, as identified by developing States.

Strategic Direction 5.2. Seek and maximize funding opportunities for the Endowment Fund for Marine Scientific Research in the Area and its beneficiaries, together with participation in global financing mechanisms.

Strategic Direction 5.3. Enable capacity-building measures to be mainstreamed into relevant initiatives.

Strategic Direction 5.4. Build on the achievements of contractor training programmes and assess their long-term impact on capacity-building.

Strategic direction 6

Ensure integrated participation by developing States

31. The Authority will implement the following strategic directions:

Strategic Direction 6.1. Continue to promote and seek opportunities for integrated participation by developing States in the implementation of the regime for the Area, paying special attention to the needs of land-locked and geographically disadvantaged States, small island developing States and the least developed countries.

Strategic Direction 6.2. Undertake a review of the extent of the participation by developing States in the Area, identify and understand any specific barriers to such participation and address them accordingly, including through targeted outreach and partnerships.

Strategic Direction 6.3. In cooperation with States Parties, initiate and promote measures providing opportunities to personnel from developing States for training in marine science and technology and for their full participation in activities in the Area (Convention, art. 144 (2) (b)).

Strategic Direction 6.4. Carry out a detailed resource assessment of the reserved areas that are available to the Enterprise and developing States.

Strategic Direction 6.5. Identify possible approaches to the establishment of the Enterprise in a way that meets the objectives of the Convention and the 1994 Agreement while taking into account that the Enterprise lacks capital and is limited to operating through joint ventures.

Strategic direction 7

Improve the organizational performance of the Authority

32. The Authority will implement the following strategic directions:

Strategic Direction 7.1. Strengthen its institutional capacity and functioning through the allocation of sufficient resources and expertise to deliver its work programmes.

Strategic Direction 7.2. Facilitate a fuller, more active and more informed participation by members of the Authority and other stakeholders through the adoption of working methods which are focused, targeted and effective and delivered under enhanced conditions of transparency and accountability, leading to a more inclusive approach to decision-making.

Strategic Direction 7.3. Keep work programmes and working methodologies under review such that they achieve the objectives set by members of the Authority within a reasonable time frame and cost-effectively through improved planning and management.

Strategic Direction 7.4. Assess long-term options for funding its operations.

Strategic direction 8

Commit to transparency

33. The Authority will implement the following strategic directions:

Strategic Direction 8.1. Communicate information about its work in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Strategic Direction 8.2. Facilitate access to non-confidential information.

Strategic Direction 8.3. Adopt clear, open and cost-effective working practices and procedures and ensure that the chain of responsibility and accountability of all relevant actors is fully understood and properly managed in the development, implementation and enforcement of technical, environmental, operational, scientific and safety regulations and standards for activities in the Area.

Strategic Direction 8.4. Build a stakeholder communications and consultation strategy and platform which facilitates open, meaningful and constructive dialogue, including on stakeholder expectations.

V. Expected outcomes

34. Successful implementation of the Plan and its strategic directions will result in the delivery of:

(a) A comprehensive legal framework for carrying out activities in the Area for the benefit of mankind as a whole (Convention, art. 140 (1)), including necessary measures to ensure:

(i) Effective protection for the marine environment (ibid., art. 145);

(ii) Effective protection of human life (ibid., art. 146);

(iii) Orderly, safe, and rational management of the resources of the Area, including the efficient conduct of activities in the Area and, in accordance with sound principles of conservation, the avoidance of unnecessary waste (ibid., art. 150 (b)), drawing on the best available scientific evidence and generally accepted applicable international rules and standards.

(b) An appropriate mechanism to provide for the equitable sharing of financial and other economic benefits derived from activities in the Area on a non-discriminatory basis (ibid., art. 140 (2)), as further directed by the objectives, principles and requirements set out in article 13 (1) of annex III to the Convention and section 8 of the annex to the 1994 Agreement.

(c) The ability to promote and encourage the conduct of marine scientific research in the Area and to coordinate and disseminate the results of such research and analysis when available, as required under article 143 (2) of the Convention.

(d) The ability to acquire technology and scientific knowledge relating to activities in the Area and to promote and encourage the transfer to developing States of such technology and scientific knowledge so that all States Parties benefit therefrom (ibid., art. 144, and as further governed by the principles set out in the 1994 Agreement, annex, sect. 5) and to promote effective participation of developing States in activities in the Area as specifically provided for in part XI (Convention., art. 148).

(e) An Authority with the institutional capacity, public acceptance, credibility and state of readiness to act as a "fit-for-purpose" regulator of activities in the Area

by reference to contemporary benchmarks, and as a publicly accountable supervisory body that facilitates access to information and values contributions by stakeholders.

(f) Enhanced effectiveness and reach of the Authority in carrying out its functions under the Convention through effective two-way stakeholder communication.

(g) An effective contribution by the Authority to the achievement of relevant Sustainable Development Goals by alignment of its programmes and initiatives.

(h) Identification and prioritization of technical assistance needs for developing States, including those to help facilitate participation in activities in the Area.

(i) The establishment of a monitoring programme to observe, measure, evaluate and analyse, by recognized scientific methods, on a regular basis, the risks or effects of pollution of the marine environment resulting from activities in the Area, ensure that existing regulations are adequate and are complied with and coordinate the implementation of the monitoring programme (ibid., art. 165 (2) (h)).

Appendix I

Contribution by the International Seabed Authority to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Goals		*Contribution by the International Seabed Authority*
Goal 1	End poverty in all its forms everywhere	Through the distribution of payments received by the Authority in accordance with equitable sharing criteria
Goal 4	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	Through the promotion of the transfer of skills and knowledge through training programmes and scholarships to least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries
Goal 5	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	Encouragement of gender equality through dedicated efforts to increase opportunities for qualified women from developing States to participate in marine scientific research programmes
Goal 8	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	Through its contribution to: (a) sustainable economic growth and the promotion of access for least developed countries to the Area and its resources; and (b) the protection of labour rights for those engaged in activities in the Area in conjunction with the International Labour Organization
Goal 9	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	Through its contribution to improving the technological capabilities of developing countries
Goal 12	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns	Through the encouragement of sustainable production practices
Goal 13	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	Through the development of specific research programmes designed to improve the assessment of essential ecological functions of the deep sea oceans through long-term underwater oceanographic observatories in the Area
Goal 14	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	Through its contribution to increasing scientific knowledge, developing research capacity and the transfer of marine technology and the advancement of a common and uniform approach, consistent with the Convention and international law, to the sustainable use of ocean resources
Goal 16	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	Through: (a) the promotion of the rule of law; (b) the development of effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels; (c) responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels; (d) broadened and strengthened participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
Goal 17	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	Through fostering strategic partnerships, including with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

Annex II

Draft decision of the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority relating to the Strategic Plan of the Authority for the period 2019–2023

The Assembly of the International Seabed Authority,

Recalling its decision of 18 August 2017, at the twenty-third session of the International Seabed Authority,[1] to request inter alia, the Secretary-General, in view of the importance of a long-term plan defining the strategic direction and aims of the Authority, to submit a draft strategic plan to the Assembly for consideration at its twenty-fourth session, in 2018, and to regularly inform member States on progress with respect to the plan,

Recalling also that all 29 exploration contracts currently signed by the Authority will be in force during the period of the Plan,

Acknowledging the challenges for the Authority raised by the transition from exploration to exploitation,

Emphasizing the importance of ensuring that the Strategic Plan be kept under regular review and the results monitored for effectiveness,

1. *Adopts* the Strategic Plan of the International Seabed Authority for the Period 2019–2023, as contained in the annex, which provides a uniform basis for the strengthening of existing working practices of the Authority;

2. *Invites* members of the Authority and observers, as well as the organs of the Authority, to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General, as a matter or priority, to prepare a high-level action plan, to include key performance indicators and a list of outputs for the next five years, and taking into account available financial and human resources, for consideration by the Assembly at its twenty-fifth session;

4. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to provide the Assembly with a detailed overview of the implementation mechanisms to be established, including for monitoring, evaluation and learning;

5. *Emphasizes* the importance of ensuring that the implementation mechanisms also include provision for midterm and final evaluation, to enable an assessment of the implementation and impact of the Strategic Plan, enhancing organization development effectiveness and accountability, as well as informing, with lessons learned, the development of the next Strategic Plan;

6. *Recognizes* that the operative period of the Strategic Plan will be five years, without excluding the possibility, once the first review is undertaken, of adopting a longer-term plan in the future.

[1] ISBA/23/A/13.